

Upper limb simple lymphatic drainage (SLD)

(Adapted from the Lymphoedema Network Wales guidelines and based on the Casley-Smith method of Manual Lymphatic Drainage)

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

This very gentle massage is part of the daily treatment for your swelling. It helps move the fluid from a swollen area to one that drains more freely. Your therapist will teach you how to do SLD and this leaflet will remind you how to do it.

If you are unable to perform the massage by yourself, a partner or carer could help you.

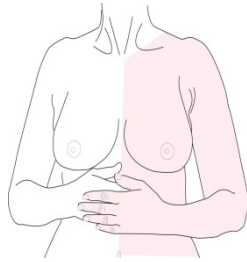
What to do

- Massage very slowly and gently. It should take about 20 minutes to complete
- Massage when you are comfortable; sitting or lying down is best
- Do not press too hard
- Creams and oils are not needed. If you are hot and sticky, a small amount of talc can be used
- Do not massage over an area that is very painful
- If you notice any new or unexplained lumps/changes, please contact your GP or specialist therapist immediately
- If you have had radiotherapy, you need to wait for 6 weeks before you start the massage over that area
- If you have cellulitis, do not do SLD until you are better

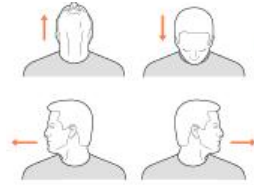
In the diagrams, we talk of your unaffected (good) side and affected (bad) side.

Step 1 – Breathing

- Sit or lie down with your shoulders relaxed and hands resting below your ribs
- Breathe in and feel your stomach rising (imagine a balloon inflating under your hands)
- Slowly breathe out and press gently inwards with your hands
- Repeat five times

**Step 2 – Specific exercises (10 of each)**

1. Look up then down, look left then right (repeat five times)

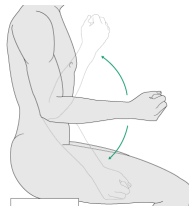


2. Place your hand in your armpit

- Cross the other arm across your body towards your opposite hip
- Repeat 10 times on both sides

**Step 3 – Specific exercises (10 of each)**

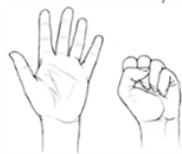
1. Bend and straighten your elbow



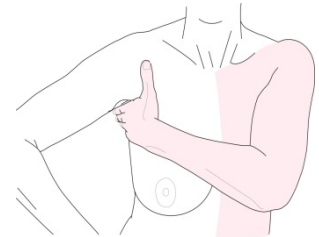
2. Move wrist up and down



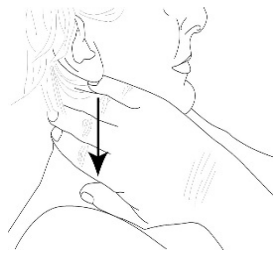
3. Open and close fist

**Step 4 – Alternative to Step 2, point 2 (Armpit)**

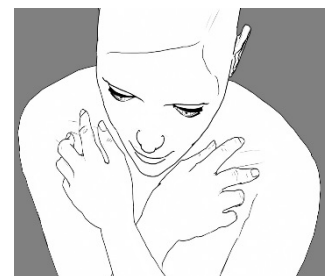
- Place your hand in your armpit
- Massage upwards into your armpit and release (10 times)
- Ensure the direction is always upwards
- Repeat both sides

**Step 5 – Neck**

- Place your hands on both sides of your neck below your ears
- Gently stroke the skin down towards your collarbones and release
- Repeat this movement 10 times

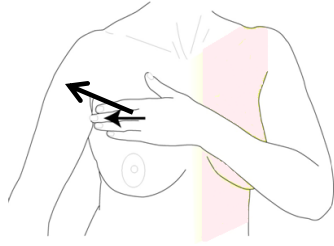
**Step 6 – Collarbones**

- Place your index finger above, and your middle finger below your collarbone, so that the collarbone lies between these two fingers.
- Gently push downwards and release
- Repeat 10 times on both sides



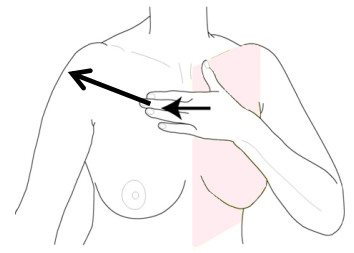
Step 7 – Chest (unaffected side)

- Place your hand on the unaffected side of your chest
- Stroke across the skin towards your unaffected armpit
- Repeat 10 times, always stroking into the armpit



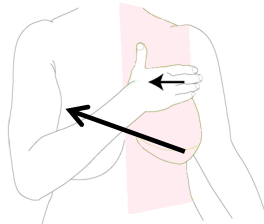
Step 8 – Chest (central)

- Place your hand on the middle of your chest
 - Stroke the skin towards the unaffected armpit
 - Repeat 10 times, always stroking into the armpit
- Remember to clear the armpit every now and then



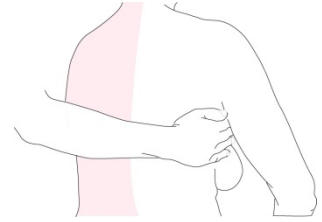
Step 9 – Chest (affected side)

- Place your hand on the affected side of your chest
 - Stroke across the skin towards your unaffected armpit
 - Repeat 10 times, always stroking into the armpit
- Remember to clear the armpit every now and then



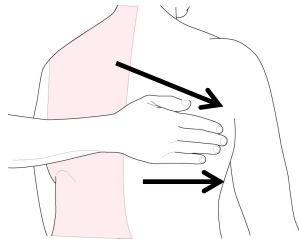
Step 10 – Armpit/Back (with help)

- You can sit or lie down on your front
- Helper places their hand in your unaffected armpit
- Massage upwards into the armpit and release
- Repeat 10 times
- Ensure the direction is always upwards



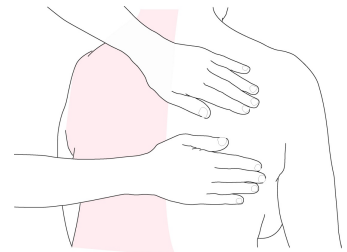
Step 11 – Back 1 (with help)

- Helper places hand/s on the unaffected side of the back
- Stroke the skin across into the unaffected armpit and release
- Repeat 10 times



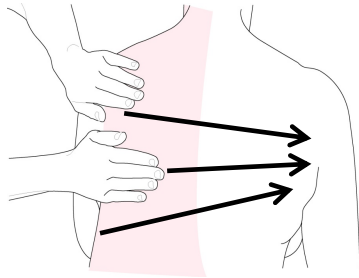
Step 12 – Back 2 (with help)

- Helper places hand/s on the middle of the back
- Stroke across the skin into the unaffected armpit and release
- Repeat 10 times



Step 13 – Back 3 (with help)

- Helper places hand/s on the affected side of the back
- Stroke across the skin into the unaffected armpit and release
- Repeat 10 times



Remember to clear the armpit every now and then

Steps 14 and 15 – Finishing your SLD

Repeat Step 2 and 3 – **Specific exercises** (10 each)

- Neck – look up and down, left and right (5 times only)
- Armpit – arm up and out, then down and across
- Elbow – bend and straighten elbow
- Wrist – move hand up and down
- Finger – open and close fist

Repeat Step 1 – **Breathing exercise** (5 times)

- Sit or lie down with your shoulders relaxed and hands resting below your ribs
- Breathe in and feel your stomach rising
- Slowly breathe out and press gently inwards with your hands

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
Raleigh Park, Barnstaple
Devon EX31 4JB
Tel. 01271 322577
www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk

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Tel: 01271 313970 / email: ndht.contactus@nhs.net